

21 June 1971

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MEMORANDUM FOR: [REDACTED]

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FROM : [REDACTED] Analyst, I/L

SUBJECT : Comments on Working Paper: The
Question of the Khmer Communist
Order of Battle

Attached are my comments on Sam Adam's paper. In general, I think that it a subject that deserves close attention from an analytical as well as a collection viewpoint. While I have taken exception throughout the paper to the numbers and methodologies used, I believe, as the paper states, there are more of the enemy in Cambodia than present estimates indicate.

However, I feel that the efforts directed on the Communist infrastructure and force levels in Cambodia would be of greater value if they stressed the areas of concern to the enemy and the nature of his presence in these areas. Cambodia to Hanoi is a bridge to South Vietnam. They do not necessarily have to own the bridge to use it. More importantly, it ^{should be considered} ~~must be remembered~~ that the North Vietnamese regime ^{MAY} ~~would~~ not look favorably on a strong, indige^Nous Cambodian armed force, no matter who controlled it.

The force of history is often blurred by the speed of current events. To date, the opposition has proved far more capable of controlling the speed of events than have we.

PARA 4;

"The Khmer OB does not treat the lower four in detail, although Communist forces in Indochina customarily build their armies from the bottom up, using the larger number of troops at the lower echelons to flesh out the higher levels."

The underlined assumption directs the reader to view the building of the ^CKA infrastructure and military arm as if he were on the tip of the proverbial iceberg when in fact I believe he really is standing on the scaffolding in the sub-basement of a skyscraper still abuilding. I know of no study nor compilation of facts which would indicate that the Communists could afford the luxury of the "traditional" from "bottom up" mode in Cambodia. In fact, all of the available evidence suggests the opposite is the case. In short, the Vietnamese Communists have formed a military arm in Cambodia. The personnel in this arm went from peasant to combatant in the length of time it took to recruit him as such. There are no stages of development of

✓ the ideological commitment of ^r any similar thing as there was in Vietnam. The man is a number whose effectiveness in combat can scarcely be considered more than his brother in FANK.

PARA 4;

"Furthermore, the OB does not take note of such phenomena as the massive training program which the Viet Cong started in Cambodia last year which is now graduating many thousands of new soldiers."

I know that the Communists have been trying to "graduate many thousand" of recruits, however, I am not aware that they have met with such sweeping success. I would be reluctant to accept that such is the case, taking exception to those areas where there is a paucity of reporting. These areas would include Siem Reap, northern Kampot, and the entire northeastern quarter of the country.

Second, the OB may too strict in its criteria for accepting new units on its rolls.

While the criteria may be too strict, a case may also be ^{MADE} which this study does not ^{ADEQUATELY} address where the Communists have formed units but found them ineffective or, in some cases, uncontrollable and subsequently disbanded them. What the study is in effect calling for is the inclusion in the OB of

✓every Tam, Duc, and Hally who the Communists have approached in the past year.

PARA 4;

"Third, the OB should take into account past experience concerning the Viet Cong's demonstrated ability to organize people, both in Vietnam and Laos."

A most important point which the study unfortunately does not adequately develop. Recent reporting of more than 9,000 Khmer Communist regrouping to NVN and available to reinfiltrate-if they have not already done so-^{offers a potentially} far more palatable argument for the numbers of "guerrilla-militia" assumed in the report than to take a population figure and apply what appears a somewhat arbitrarily^R arrived at factor of 3 percent. The study's raison d'etre is to alert the community to the developing presence in Cambodia. To reach responsive ears it would seem advisable to discuss the problem in growing functions and probable potentials rather than staggering factors and figures.

THE MAIN FORCES

PARAS 24 THROUGH 31

The 174th is presently north of Binh Long Province and is believed subordinate to the 5th Division, not the C40 Front. Furthermore, it appeared

✓ during the developments of last spring and early summer of 1970 that the 5th Division was tasked with the training of any Khmer force that was to develop. Witness the 275 A and B, the latter which was to become the 203. What occurs to me is that NVA fillers were used to restaff the 5th Division after it had dispatched a considerable number of its own forces to the Cambodian effort. What I would like to stress is that there was only one Communist Division split for the ^{Khmer} Communists and it seems unlikely that it could have regenerated itself, much less formed a force of superior numbers. That is, the ten to fifteen regiments mentioned in para 30 is perhaps on the high side. Ten regiments, after all, amounts to three divisions, one of which would be re-inforced. I would judge it unlikely that the Communists-no matter how effective their recruiting program might have been- could have duplicated in Cambodia in one year what they have committed to the GVN MR 3 area-the 5th, 7th, and 9th divisions,-for the past 2 years. Furthermore, these are divisions which must be filled with personnel infiltrated from the north because there are not enough VIETNAMESE in South Vietnam available for recruitment to replace losses.

✓ LOCAL FORCES

PARAS 32 THROUGH 49

I do not feel that I am presently well enough read on this area to comment more than in general terms. I do know that in the beginning of the war in spring 1970 there were numerous reports from border provinces of district and provincial level local force units springing up all over creation. However, by the summer of 1970 there were a like number of reports of these forces being disbanded or dissipated en masse.

GUERRILLA/MILITIA

PARAS 50 THROUGH 63

I find the methodology unacceptable. As mentioned above, I believe the problem should be approached from an input position; that is, what could they do. If all of the 9,000 Khmers have returned by, say, December 70, then it would not be too much to expect that they have at least recruited by this time an equal number; by December 71 twice their number and so forth. To arbitrarily apply the 3 percent factor where the Vietnamese are foreigners who are ethnically unacceptable to the Cambodians and assume that could in one year perform on a level

at one half of what they did in many years in Vietnam is giving the devil his due and a few points for bad behavior.

THE MATTER OF QUALITY

PARAS 64 THROUGH 72

At last. However, I would in my most cynical moments put FANK at better than a stand off with what forces the Communists have been able to recruit in Cambodia. I know little of the situation in Laos, but the fighting in Cambodia has been undertaken by the Main Force Vietnamese elements against FANK. While I would be the last to defend FANK as anything but a weak army, it is an army that is getting better and until more information on the Communist's counter part emerges, I cannot see any reason to expect them to be better than the Cambodians we are training. In fact, the Communists could be expected to be of lesser quality owing material problems shortages and are certain to be a lesser quantity. In short, I find no reason to assume that the KC and FANK would fight to a stand off. In fact, if this was not the case there seems little reason for the Vietnamese Main Force elements to continue to engage FANK as has been the case for the past year.

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21 June 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Indochina Division

SUBJECT : Comments on the Working Paper: The Question of The Khmer Communist Order of Battle

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1. Attached are written appraisals of the subject memorandum as prepared separately [redacted]

[redacted] There apparently seems to be a consensus that existing estimates of Khmer Communists are too low. Saying this, however, all seem to agree that given the existing data base any upward scaling of this force level to a minimum of 100,000 men is unwarranted. Each provide some compelling arguments to underwrite their position and I generally endorse the overall level of analysis as contained therein.

2. My own personal feelings after reading the piece is that the analysis being so loaded with "mays", and "possibles" has value, only in that it will give impetus to a complete review of the problem. This is not to say our position will change radically, but it is true that the press of other business - I might add of considerably higher priority -- has not permitted in depth research on this problem. Finally, perhaps this new effort is indeed all the author of the piece really wanted. If so, he has achieved his goal.

3. Some other comments are in order. I am left totally unimpressed by the statistical gamemanship that laces the entire analysis. Cambodians are not Vietnamese nor Laotians either in their religious, political, and social structure. To take the Vietnamese analytical framework, transfer it to Cambodia and cut the percentage relationships to the aggregates by some margin ranging often as high as 50%, and then adding and rounding upward or downward as the mood fits is not a very persuasive analytical tool in my judgment. I focus here on one particular issue, the guerrilla - militia figure. First the base data of population under Communist control has to be viewed not in the aggregate but on a province by province

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basis. There is a qualitative factor that is ignored by lumping all provinces together. The northeast provinces, where there is no government presence, and the population is small, is unlike the northwest or southeast etc., where somewhat different conditions prevail. Moreover, I perceive that dissatisfaction with the existing government by Cambodians in rural areas can not easily be translated into a willingness to carry arms to overthrow the existing regime. To the political Cambodian peasant, the insertion of a Pro-Vietnamese Communist regime must certainly be an enigma -- especially in light of their distrust, fear, and hatred of most Vietnamese whether they be ARVN or NVA/VC. Moreover, ~~the~~ new regime would offer as much chance for peace as the current one does.

4. Other things in the paper such as equating the KC with FANK is at best an oversimplification and at worst unwarranted by the facts of either the equipment and role of each. Despite its somewhat poor performance, FANK is victimized mainly by poor leadership, not a lack of zeal by the men, women, and boys manning the defenses. The fighting qualities of the KC is underscored more by the fact that given their postulated structure, the NVA/VC have borne the brunt of not nearly all the fighting. We certainly haven't seen significant KC elements involved in any of the major actions of the war in Cambodia so far.

5. In sum, therefore, although the analysis may appear rational and proportioned on the surface, its structural foundations are weak and need much more support if the edifice is to stand. Perhaps, summed it up best of all -- "multiplying two conjectures may lead to an absurdity".

South Vietnam Branch

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1. Mr. Adams has written a very thought provoking study on the question of the structure and size of the Khmer Communist (KC) OB in Cambodia. His study obviously has involved much research and the compiling of numerous fragments of data. Mr. Adams, the principal analyst involved in the 1968 reform of the Communist OB in SVN, ^{also} has drawn heavily upon ~~his wealth of~~ ^{knowledge of} information about the Communist structure in South Vietnam.

2. Having worked closely with Mr. Adams for some 3 years, and having seen history "prove" his original SVN enemy OB figures "correct", I do not view Mr. Adams' paper lightly. However, I do not feel that he has provided sufficient evidence to justify a KC estimate ^{anywhere} ~~analysis~~, near "as high as 100,000 or more." As Mr. Adams admits throughout the paper, the construction of such an estimate is based on a great deal of conjective ^{ure} on his part. On the other hand, I feel that Mr. Adams has demonstrated sufficiently, ~~as he has in the past~~, that the enemy's structure and strength is probably greater than we are currently estimating. (Although I did not specifically address the KC estimate, see my Memo for the Record dated 28 April 1971, indicating a growing concern on the reliability of I/SV's Estimates of Communist Forces in Indochina). Specific comments follow.

3. Pages i, ii, iii and 3: Mr. Adams assumption regarding the correlation between a large KC force and the population under Communist control do not in and of themselves constitute evidence of a given force level.

4. Pages iii and iv: I would concur with the two conclusions that the Communists probably have been much more successful in organizing the population than has been recognized and that they intend to give considerable priority to operations in Cambodia for the immediate future.

5. Page 1: I would agree ^{with} ~~would~~ the general development of the KC OB estimate. OER/I/SV has relied exclusively on DIA for these numbers and has no independent estimate. However, we bear the ~~full~~ burden of responsibility for the number as we have accepted and used it "lock, stock, and barrel."

6. Page 2: Although the intent of the Communists to establish a KC military structure with six echelons as in SVN is accepted, the extent to which this has been done is still questionable in my mind. Although I have not studied the KC position in any where near the detail that Mr. Adams has, I do not believe that they are 10 feet tall in their ability to organize and develop a viable military structure. ^{as presented in the paper.}

7. Page 3: I would take exception with Mr. Adams ^(s) statement that our "criteria" (which ^{is} ~~he~~ never defined) for

accepting new units into the OB are too strict. In fact, our "criteria" is quite loose, depending largely on analyst judgment rather than any fixed number of reports from captured documents or prisoners as was the case with the SVN OB in and prior to 1968. In doing an enemy OB by unit for any country, including Cambodia, ^{one} ~~are~~ must have some evidence before accepting the existence of a unit. As Mr. Adams readily admits on pages 3 and 8, available intelligence on the KC from document, prisoners, and defectors as well as COMINT is seriously limited.

8. The "most prolific" source of intelligence on Cambodia Mr. Adams ascribes (on page 3) to the Agency's agent reports. He indicates that these reports are not used in our "criteria" for accepting a unit into the OB. In this Mr Adams is generally correct. However, he himself clearly explains why this is so on page 4 where he states that "agents are prone to exaggerate and because our units in Cambodia are inexperienced." Again, talking about Local Forces on page 18, he downgrades the significance of these reports indicating the evidence from them "is usually low level and always incomplete, often acquired from persons who are none too sure what they are reporting about." In other words, information provided in the agent

reports on military matters is not generally reliable enough to be accepted.

9. In his specific discussions of KC Main Force, Local Force, and Guerrillas, Mr. Adams appears to make a good case that their forces do exist and possibly in a number larger than we currently carry. However, he has not proven to my satisfaction that their strengths is anywhere near the level cited. A Fank 6-2 report, used in deriving the structure and ~~their~~ size of KC Main Forces (page 15), is not in and of itself evidence that these units do exist, the main hypothesis Mr. Adams is trying to prove. In addition, the doubling of the figure of KC in regimental formation to take into account smaller units also is not evidence of their existence or size. Since this latter figure is directly derived from one based on the number of KC regiments, a figure we believe is ^{FAR} ~~much~~ too high, the estimate of KC in largely Khmer units is probably overstated to a considerable extent.

10. In addition, the development of Local Forces and guerrillas appear to be overestimated. While there no doubt has been some development of these forces, I do not feel the evidence is as yet sufficient to extrapolate from a few localized cases to a countrywide estimate. I just cannot believe that the KC have developed to the

extent indicated in the paper. Such a development as Mr. Adams' portrays seems to contradict the Communists' conscious decision and apparent need to maintain a large number of NVA/VC combat and support personnel in Cambodia.

11. Despite my overall rejection of Mr. Adams' estimate, I do feel that he has brought to light a considerable amount of information on the KC force structure and size. This information to me suggests a KC force level probably above the CIA/DIA 5,000-to 10,000 estimate but considerably below his estimate of 100,000 or more. Therefore, I feel a careful review of documents be made with the intent of deriving a new OER/I/SV estimate of KC forces. ,



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